

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2013

PRESENT:	Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)
	The Education Authority
	Councillors Gwilym O.Jones, R.Llewelyn Jones, Alun Mummery
	Religious Denominations
	Mrs Catherine Jones (The Baptist Union of Wales) Stephen Francis Roe (The Methodist Church)
	Teachers
	Mrs Mefys Edwards (Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones)
IN ATTENDANCE:	D.Gareth Jones (Primary Education Officer) Ann Holmes (Committee Officer)
APOLOGIES:	Councillor W.T.Hughes, Peter Rogers, Mr Rheinallt Thomas
ALSO PRESENT:	Miss Bethan James (GwE)

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES OF THE 28TH JUNE, 2013 MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the SACRE held on 28 June, 2013 were presented and confirmed as correct.

3 MATTERS ARISING ON THE MINUTES

- The Education Officer reminded Members as per the discussion at the previous meeting that the Anglesey SACRE body had historically reserved the right to appoint a Chairperson from among the LEA's representatives on the body and that the LEA had traditionally exercised its right to make the appointment. The Officer informed the SACRE that in the period since the previous meeting, Councillor Dylan Rees had been appointed to undertake that function and he introduced Councillor Rees to the SACRE as its new Chair.

Members of the SACRE unanimously endorsed the appointment.

- With reference to the two schools whose RE self-evaluation reports remained outstanding at the previous meeting, the Education Officer said that despite several requests for the information, the reports of Ysgol Pentraeth and Ysgol y Fali had yet to be received. He suggested that a letter be sent to the Chairs of the Governing Body of the respective schools. Members of the SACRE were in concurrence with this suggestion given that the information was essential for the body to carry out its monitoring responsibilities and having taking into consideration the fact that previous requests for the reports had been made.

Action Arising: Education Officer to write to the respective Chairs of the Governing Bodies of Ysgol Pentraeth and Ysgol y Fali about the availability of their RE self-evaluation reports and why their provision is important to the fulfilment of the SACRE's duties as a monitoring body.

- The Education Officer confirmed that information regarding access to the RE News website had been provided to the SACRE's Members and to other relevant personnel. Miss Bethan James, Systems Leader asked Members to share any information about local projects and good or innovative practices of which they might be aware so that these might be more widely disseminated.
- The Education Officer confirmed that the arrangements agreed at the previous meeting whereby the SACRE would request school self-evaluation reports on a cyclical basis both in the primary and secondary sectors had been put into effect and that the self-evaluation report of Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern was the first secondary report received under the new system as included on the agenda.
- In relation to the provision of support for the SACRE, the Education Officer informed Members that the LEA has held discussions with the GwE with the outcome that 3 days per term of the Systems Leader's time will be made available to the SACRE. The support provided will take on the form of guidance, specialist input and reports to the SACRE but will not include undertaking visits to schools. The issue of support has been raised and taken forward at the North Wales level because of the statutory basis of the SACRE body. Miss Bethan James, Systems Leader said that she would be providing administrative support to the SACRE in the main although a request has been made that she continue in her representative role at meetings of the WASACRE. Due to the change in the nature of the support to be provided and the loss of the advisory input to schools by Cynnal, consideration needs to be given to how RE teachers will in future support themselves in their own professional development within the subject area. Consequently it will also fall to the SACRE as a body to advise the LEA in terms of facilitating a process whereby RE teachers can come together to refine and develop their skills and expertise.
- The Education Officer confirmed that the Estyn report of Religious Education in secondary schools has been circulated to the Island's 5 secondary schools as per the SACRE's request at its previous meeting.
- With regard to the review of National Curriculum subjects, the Education Officer informed the SACRE that the Welsh Government is until 17th January, 2014 consulting on proposals for a revised curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales. The curriculum comprises of 11 subjects with RE as an additional statutory subject. This exercise represents the first phase of a two stage process and focuses on improving the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills across the Curriculum whilst the second phase will relate to the Curriculum content. The Officer explained that a new national Literacy and Numeracy Framework (covering Years 2 to 9) was introduced some time ago and that the first phase of the consultation seeks to better align the LNF and the Curriculum so that all subjects across the National Curriculum (and RE) provide opportunities to improve and develop literacy and numeracy skills. Miss Bethan James said that the indications at present are that RE will not be included in the second phase consultation on the review of the Curriculum on the grounds that the RE is not a curricular subject and that the RE syllabus is a matter for local SACRE bodies. However, discussions regarding this matter are on-going and RE Teachers are keen that the subject should reflect developments in other parts of the Curriculum. She said that she and her former humanities advisors who continue to support SACRE bodies have agreed to meet on 6th January to discuss and formulate a response to the first phase of the Welsh Government's consultation on behalf of the Wales RE Advisory Panel. She said that any observations which the SACRE's Members might have on the matter would be welcome.

In response to questions by the SACRE in relation to what the consultation might mean for standards, Miss Bethan James explained the background to the Welsh Government's emphasis on improving literacy and numeracy skills including questions raised around the consistency and validity of teacher assessments at KS3; questions around continuity between the primary and secondary sectors and the suggestion that Welsh school pupils are not achieving to the levels they might in the context of PISA tests because of weaker literacy and numeracy skills. The Secondary Teachers' representative highlighted what in practical terms the focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills has meant following the introduction of the LNF in terms of trying to apply those skills to subjects such as RE meaning that there is less attention given to the subject content although the standard of the end work might be better. The dilemma is around balancing the requirements of the LNF and improved literacy and numeracy standards against the completion of subject modules.

Since the SACRE felt it was not in a position to provide a formal response to the consultation at this meeting and in view of the fact that the body would not meet again until after the closing date for response, the Systems Leader suggested that feedback from the RE Advisory Panel's meeting on the 6th January be provided to the Education Officer to allow a response to be made by Anglesey. The Officer said that the question is - in the event of the establishment of a curriculum review group, does the SACRE want RE to be part of that provision or to remain as a separate stand-alone subject. Members of the SACRE believed it was important that Religious Education is included in discussions around a curricular review and that that view is made known ahead of the second phase consultation.

It was agreed that RE as a subject be included in discussions in preparation for the second phase of the Welsh Government consultation on Curricular content.

Action Arising: Systems Leader to provide the Education Officer with information on the outcome of the deliberations of the RE Advisory Panel from its meeting on 6th January, 2014.

4 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ANGLESEY SACRE FOR 2012/13

The draft Annual Report of the Anglesey SACRE for 2012/13 was presented for consideration and approval.

Miss Bethan James, Systems Leader provided Members with background information to the preparation of the report along with a summary explanation of its contents which were based on the deliberations of the SACRE at its meetings held during 2012/13. The Officer proceeded to bring the following matters to the SACRE's attention –

- With reference to school's self-evaluation reports, whether the SACRE was happy to support the practice of naming those schools which had failed to submit a self-evaluation report for the SACRE.

Members discussed the matter and they sought clarification of the timescales and the work involved in completing the self-evaluation. The Systems Leader said that schools are expected to have undertaken the preparatory planning work making completion of the self-evaluation proforma a less onerous task.

In light of the fact that requests are made to schools to present their self-evaluation reports to the SACRE's attention for monitoring reasons and that an initial failure to do so is followed up by correspondence, the SACRE's Members were agreed with the principle that schools who still fail to comply be named in the Annual Report.

It was agreed that schools who fail to present their self-evaluation reports be named in the Annual Report. It was also agreed that Ysgol y Tywyn and Ysgol Llanddona be given the opportunity to amend their self-evaluation reports to include in the case of the former, a judgement on the quality of the outcomes or provision in Religious Education and on the quality of the provision for collective worship and in the case of the latter, to include a judgement on the provision of Religious Education.

- With reference to outcomes in Religious Education, whether the SACRE was happy with the practice of naming schools which are able to identify good features for the purpose of highlighting good practice to be drawn upon by other schools.

It was agreed that those schools able to identify good features be named in the Annual Report.

- With reference to the SACRE's recommendation to the Anglesey LEA with regard to outcomes in RE, whether the SACRE was happy to retain the recommendation that RE Co-ordinators be invited to present their work to SACRE Members.

It was agreed that the said recommendation be retained within the Annual Report.

- With reference to the section outlining the support provided by the Cynnal Advisory Services, the Systems Leader pointed out that consideration will have to be given to the contents of this section for the forthcoming year since the advisory branch of Cynnal was disbanded on 31 March, 2013.
- With reference to the list of Welsh Government publications in the form of guidance documents for RE teachers, the Systems Leader said that all but the People, Questions, and Beliefs: Religious Education in the Foundation Phase guidance had been formally considered by the SACRE. The Officer suggested that the document would be useful to primary schools as a repository of ideas to promote good practice although it was not currently available via the WG website. Members of the SACRE consented to the circulation of a copy of the guidance document to the Island's primary schools to be drawn upon for ideas and good practice.

It was agreed to accept the draft Annual Report of the Anglesey SACRE for 2012/13 subject to typographical amendments noted in the course of the discussion.

Actions Arising:

- **Education Officer to contact Ysgol y Tywyn and Ysgol Gynradd Llanddona to offer them the opportunity to re-submit their RE self-evaluation reports to include a judgement on the quality of the provision of RE and collective worship as relevant.**
- **Education Officer in consultation with Systems Leader to arrange for primary schools to receive a copy of the People, Questions and Beliefs: RE and the Foundation Phase guidance document to be used as a reference for ideas and good practice.**
- **Committee Officer to request the SACRE's Chair for 2012/13 to provide a foreword to the Annual Report.**

5 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS

- A report on KS3 Teacher assessments in RE along with the results of Summer 2013 external examinations was presented for the SACRE's attention. The report provided information on the standards reached, the comparative achievement of girls and boys and the number of candidates in the examinations.

The Systems Leader informed the SACRE that KS3 performance data for two secondary schools had not been received. It was agreed that the two schools in question – Ysgol Gyfun Llangefni and Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern be requested to provide the said data. The Officer highlighted the fact that the gap in performance between girls and boys in one school was less than in some of the others – Mrs Mefys Edwards briefly explained the teaching approach in Ysgol Syr Thomas Jones. The Systems Leader suggested that the SACRE might wish to consider receiving a presentation on RE GCSE lesson content and specifically methods used to improve boys' participation and performance in RE as a subject area – perhaps a presentation by boys regarding their attitude towards RE as a subject. She also provided the Members with an explanation of the Religious Studies short course.

It was agreed to accept the report and to note its contents.

Actions Arising:

- **Education Officer and Systems Leader in consultation with the Chair to arrange for the SACRE to receive a presentation at its next meeting around standards and performance and to determine the content of the presentation.**
- **Education Officer on behalf of the SACRE to remind Ysgol Gyfun Llangefni and Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern to make available RE KS3 performance data.**
- The report of the Education Officer providing a summary of the relevant parts of Estyn reports in relation to Ysgol Cemaes, Ysgol Corn Hir, Ysgol Moelfre and Ysgol Llaingoch was presented for the SACRE's consideration. Members noted the report.
- The RE self-evaluation report of Ysgol Uwchradd Bodedern was presented for the SACRE's consideration.

The Systems Leader said that the report provided an useful overview of standards in RE at the school as well as a taste of the kind of activities, tasks and discussions arranged as part of the RE provision at different stages and as part of collective worship arrangements.

The SACRE noted the report and expressed its appreciation of the information provided.

Action Arising: Education Officer to write on behalf of the SACRE to the Head of RE at Ysgol Uwchradd Boddeden to thank her/him for the report.

- The results of a questionnaire completed by Members of the SACRE at the end of the forum's previous meeting in June were presented. The questionnaire sought to gauge Members' knowledge and understanding of RE and collective workshop as well as seeking to identify their views regarding recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of the SACRE as a monitoring body e.g. by arranging for Members to attend a collective worship session in a sample of schools and/or to visit a school to discuss the school's self-evaluation of RE with the Re-Co-ordinator or Head of Department.

Whilst Members were agreed that it was important for the SACRE as a body to forge a closer relationship with schools particularly in light of the demise of the advisory service, they emphasised that any visits conducted should be on the basis of an invitation by an individual school and be undertaken by a representative group of the SACRE rather than by the body as a whole.

It was agreed to note the report and to endorse the recommendations.

Action Arising: Education Officer to consult with the Systems Leader regarding arrangements for putting the recommendations into practice.

6 ADVISORY SERVICE SUPPORT

It was agreed that this matter had been covered under matters arising on the minutes.

7 WASACRE

- The agenda of the meeting of the WASACRE held in Cardiff on 10th October, 2013 was presented along with the minutes of the Association's 19th June meeting held in Caernarfon, Gwynedd. The documentation was noted.
- The Treasurer's report for 2012/13 was presented and noted.
- A report on the WASACRE's activities during 2012/13 was presented and noted.

8 CORRESPONDENCE

The Education Officer referred to correspondence received and sent as set out in his report under item 4. The Officer drew attention to a request received and forwarded to him by the Secondary Education officer following an earlier meeting of the Gwynedd and Môn Local Safeguarding Board for a denominational representative to attend a meeting of the Board to be held at the Celtic Royal Hotel, Caernarfon on 28th January, 2014.

Mr Stephen Francis Roe expressed an interest in attending the meeting in his capacity as a Safeguarding Officer for the Wales Synod and was nominated to do so by the SACRE's Members.

9 NEXT MEETING OF THE SACRE

It was noted that the next meeting of the SACRE was scheduled for 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 18th February, 2014.

**Councillor Dylan Rees
Chair**